

an interdependent world, made smaller by travel, technology, and the demands of a burgeoning population. America has a critical role to play as the most powerful member of the world community. And in this community, as in all others, the golden rule still applies: we must act toward other nations as we would have them act towards America.

Tonight, let me address very quickly, in the remaining time that I have, one of these 10 commandments of national security, and that is sound intelligence.

I believe we ought to have an independent commission investigate the intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. I supported the authorization of force, as did many of my colleagues, in a bipartisan manner, on the basis of intelligence that showed that Iraq possessed chemical, biological, and nuclear programs. We must determine whether that intelligence was accurate. We must determine whether that intelligence was weighted properly. We must determine whether that intelligence was presented to this Congress and the American people in an accurate manner.

This is essential, number one, because this Congress made the most important determination it can make, and that is the determination authorizing the use of force on the basis of that intelligence; and, number two, if we are to avoid another September 11, we must ensure we have a sound intelligence process. And, finally, our standing in the world, the willingness of other nations to cooperate with America in the future will be dependent on how we resolve this issue.

INCREASED EFFICIENCY IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, tonight I want to add my voice to those of my fellow Representatives who are calling for increased efficiency in our Federal Government. Our group has taken the charge to protect precious taxpayer dollars by streamlining and improving our Federal Government. There are many important programs that are being hurt. There are expenditures which could have been handled with much greater care. With wise stewardship, we can ensure that public servants have more prudent oversight when allocating American taxpayer dollars for Federal programs.

Mr. Speaker, in my previous life I was a simple country doctor. I want to share with my colleagues some astonishing examples of some of the extreme expenditures in the Medicare program.

Over 90 percent of Medicare payments to community medical health centers in five States, \$229 million, were "unallowable or highly questionable."

Medicare paid roughly \$20 million to dead beneficiaries between 1999 and

2000. Some of these benefits were distributed despite the fact that the Department's database had the dates of death already logged in.

Mr. Speaker, since coming to Congress, I have been appointed a member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. On that committee, I wanted to make certain that the United States Department of Transportation was ensuring the most efficient business practices within the agency. On March 19, 2003, I met with the Department of Transportation Inspector General, Kenneth Mead, to discuss the business practices of the agency and how the Congress can better facilitate the decrease of inappropriate expenditures in relation to transportation's spending. Inspector General Mead and I discussed the need for greater stewardship and oversight in all of the Department of Transportation's programs.

The Department of Transportation has not changed the way the agency disburses transportation funding to State and local entities since President Eisenhower was in office. We talked some tonight about trying to achieve one penny in savings for every dollar that we spend. The Inspector General of the Department of Transportation pointed out that if 1 percent of the \$500 billion spent over the last 10 years on transportation programs was set-asides, the Department of Transportation would have an extra \$5 billion to spend. That \$5 billion, incidentally, would fund four of the current top 11 transportation building programs going on in the country today. I believe this practice could better assist the Department of Transportation in spending the taxpayers' dollars more wisely.

There are several successful transportation projects that can be used as examples for greater government efficiency. For example, Interstate Highway 15 in the State of Utah was rehabilitated ahead of schedule and under budget. Today, from my district, I met with representatives of the Dallas Area Rapid Transit and those officials reported to me that they are currently within their budget, and DART intends to return some transit funding to the Federal Government.

And, of course, we all know there are examples that are not so good of transportation projects that are overbudget and behind schedule: the Springfield Interchange, not far from here in Virginia; and perhaps the poster child of government inefficiency, the Central Artery Project in Boston, Massachusetts, the Ted Williams Tunnel, we all know down in Texas as the Big Dig.

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We need to address the misuse of Federal transportation expenditures as soon as possible.

Members may also be interested to know the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure believes government efficiency is important because next week on July 22 the com-

mittee will hold a hearing on the elimination of waste, fraud, and abuse in mandatory transportation programs as required by the fiscal year 2004 budget resolution instructions. I look forward to participating in the hearing, as well as working with the Inspector General, Mr. Mead, to further address this issue within the U.S. Department of Transportation.

We are dedicated to protecting taxpayers' hard-earned dollars from being spent on inappropriate expenditures. We need to work together to ensure that our Federal Government is more effective and more efficient for the American taxpayer.

STALLED NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE PROCESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GINGREY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow afternoon British Prime Minister Tony Blair is scheduled to address a joint session of Congress in this Chamber. Mr. Blair will likely spend much of his speech discussing both the U.S. and U.K. victory in Iraq and our efforts to bring democracy to the Iraqi people. He can certainly tout the fact that the Iraqi people are now free of oppression and finally afforded the basic human rights that were denied under the regime of Saddam Hussein.

But, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help finding it hypocritical for Prime Minister Blair to discuss freeing the Iraqis given the nature of his policies in Northern Ireland. Prime Minister Blair sent tens of thousands of British troops thousands of miles to bring democracy to a region at the same time he was denying the basic right of democracy to people only miles from the British seat of government.

Mr. Speaker, as you may know, in May Prime Minister Blair announced the indefinite postponement of the elections in Northern Ireland, which were scheduled to be held on May 29. Since his announcement, Prime Minister Blair has made little progress towards reinstating the stalled Irish peace process and providing basic human rights to the people of Northern Ireland.

Five years ago under the guidance of former Senator George Mitchell, all of the major parties, both Catholic and Protestant, signed onto an agreement that was to govern the future of Northern Ireland. The Good Friday Accords were touted near and far by human rights groups and media outlets as an agreement which would finally bring an end to the sectarian violence in Northern Ireland.

Now, just when the agreement seemed to be bearing a fruitful peace, Prime Minister Blair and his Protestant allies have decided it is time to derail the process to ensure that the citizens of Northern Ireland continue